



STEELWIND

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craig chaquico

diana harris

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1973 November

Steelwind: Fresh and Hard

by Patrick Snyder-Scumpy

Perhaps the best new California band since the heyday of psychedelica wins its Electric Mongol Horde Merit Badge.

SACRAMENTO—Travelling east from San Francisco, the summer hills are a rolling ocean of earth and sun-bleached grass studded with crouched green cypress trees. After an hour of four-lane gliding, the hills give way to the great fertile plain of the San Fernando Valley. Centered in its patchwork of fenced chlorophyll sits the provincial city of Sacramento, the unlikely home of perhaps the best new California band since the heyday of psychedelica: Steelwind.

In a small basement club beneath the city's urban renewed center, the group tuned and adjusted volume levels on the small stage. At the far right, Jack Traylor, a robust, quicksmiling bear of a man and the leader of the group stood talking to Craig Chaquico, the band's lead guitarist. They are a rather strange pair. Traylor is a 36-year-old ex-English teacher with a respectable paunch and a curly hairline in full retreat before the advance of his well-lined forehead while Chaquico is an 18-year-old ex-student of his with a newly sprouted mustache on his smooth face and straight black hair falling over his shoulders.

Raised near Sacramento where his family had come to flee the ravages of Oklahoma's dust bowl '30s, Traylor drifted through the late-'50s California folk scene playing clubs and making friends. After touring for a year and a half with the Gateway Singers, he abandoned the idea of a music career in a search for stability. "I went through a whole bunch of head things that were unhappy for me," he explained in his deep rough voice, "and I decided I wanted to settle down." He went back to college and earned teaching credentials that landed him a job as an English instructor in Sacramento. Then, a couple of years ago, after acquiring a guitar in trade for a motorcycle, he began singing and playing clubs again. Soon he asked Chaquico, who had been in one of his classes, to join him and, with a flautist, they formed Steelwind.

For a young man, Chaquico possesses an uncanny ability on the guitar. At fourteen a car accident put him in casts and traction for over two months and he spent his time doing the one thing his predicament left him the mobility to do, fingering a guitar. He is the band's musical technician and the spark that ignites their music.

Ten years before, Traylor had been a friend of another itinerant California musician, Paul Kantner, and when Jack began his second musical career, Kantner used one of his



songs, as well as Traylor and Chaquico, on *Sunfighter*.

A year and a half ago, Skip Morairy replaced the group's original flautist. He is a prodigy of sorts, having played bass in a surf group at 12, drums in a rock group at 14, and flute and guitar in his own group just before Steelwind. A quiet, self-effacing, sandy-haired young man with a furtive smile and driven by a burgeoning talent, he wrote the only non-Traylor song on their first album and has five or six more songs in their current live repertoire.

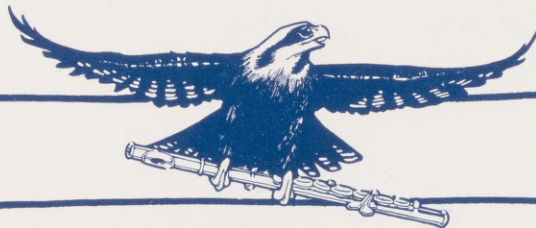
The sound Steelwind produces is entirely their own and revolves around Traylor's prolific folk-tinged songwriting, the stunning tonal blend of Morairy's winsome flute and Chaquico's flashing guitar, and the rich three-part harmonies that ornament their songs. Traylor has a voice like the chin of an unshaved lumberjack and Morairy adds a mellow sweetness, but the vocal blend is highlighted by Diana Harris' throaty raunch harmonizing. She joined the group only three weeks before the recording of the group's first album, *Child of Nature* (naturally, on Grunt) and, predictably, seems rather subdued on it in comparison to the power she injects into the band in live performance.

At the same time that Skip joined the group, Danny Virdier, an old friend of Craig's and a fellow guitarist, switched to four strings and entered the group on bass. Only recently, they added John Bishop on drums, having used renowned studio musician Rick Quintanal for the album.

With everyone ready, Steelwind launched into their opening number, Morairy's "Saturday," a fragile, moody piece that floated gracefully on a stream of sophisticated textures. The set continued with drill team tightness and climaxed with Diana's groin-churning rendition of Bessie Smith's "If I Can't Sell It, I'm Gonna Sit on It." Her whip-cracking voice and smooth, slinking sensuality spiced with a little Jack Daniels swagger had more than a few ready to buy when it was over.

All through the set, as his band made their excellent music, Traylor grinned like a profligate scoutmaster whose favorite patrol had just won the Chairman Mao/Electric Mongol Horde Merit Badge. He is the key to their present and future success, giving them a maturity in pacing and arrangement their youth does not deserve. Moreover, Traylor who plays a fine rhythm guitar, seems satisfied to stand to the side and provide a solid foundation for the others to make their music in. And well he should be, because, more than anything else, Steelwind is an excellent *band*, a group whose talents complement and inspire each other, and that's something damn hard to find. Watch them grow. Steelwind might just blow everyone else away.

CRAWDADDY



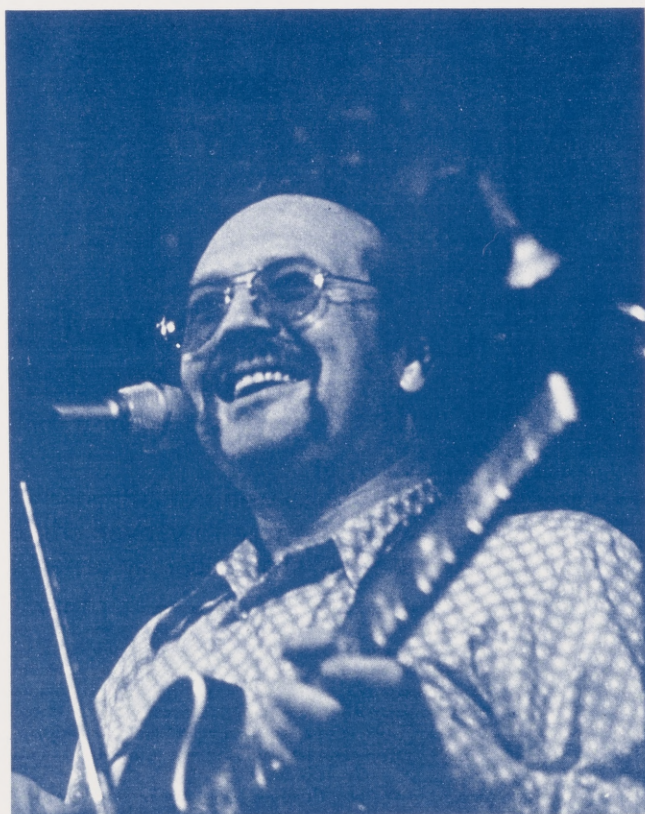
Cash Box — September 29, 1973

cash box talent on stage

Linda Ronstadt Jack Traylor & Steelwind

Opening for Linda was Jack Traylor and Steelwind, a San Francisco band that combines the energy of San Francisco music and the power of driving rock to create an entertaining blend. Lead vocalist Diane Harris, a rather outrageous lady she, carried the band with her dominant, almost Grace Slick-like vocals and gave the crowd something very pretty to watch at the same time. Currently on a national tour to promote their debut Grunt album, the group is certainly going to pick up a few new fans along the way.

a.g.



SHEPHERD

The Sacramento Bee August 31, 1973 The musical warmth of Carole King By William C. Glackin

Steelwind, one of the locally based groups that have won success on a wider scale, makes it to the big time with "Child of Nature," (Grunt BFL1-1094) issued by Grunt Records, the major pop-rock label of RCA-Victor. The billing is Jack Traylor and Steelwind, and the leader, a veteran surrounded by four younger companions, is the principal singer and author of most of the nine songs.

Rather naturally, Traylor's own musical upbringing is reflected in the title song, which has real country-western roots, and in the relaxed, pleasantly sung "Come On, Children," styled likewise.

Traylor, a native of Oklahoma whose family moved to Sacramento when he was young, listened to a lot of country-western when he was a kid. He was also a member of the Gateway Singers for a while, which may explain the sound of "Gone to Canada," a song in

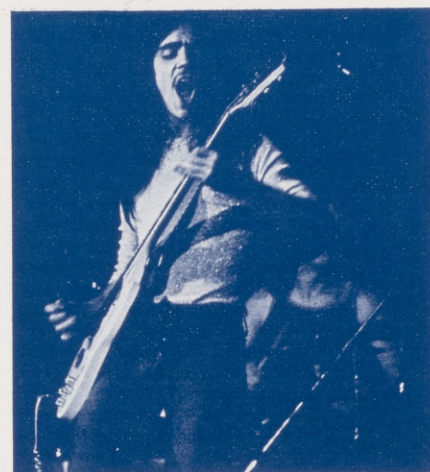
the folk tradition with a driving beat.

The other outstanding talents on the record are the lead guitar, Craig Chaquico, an 18-year old who grew up on a farm outside of town, and Skip Morairty, 19, who plays fine, swift, flexible, musical flute, heard to superb advantage on the jazzy "Birds and Beasts and Bumblebees," the mournful-grateful "Fifteen Years After," and, in a long solo, on "Caveat Emptor" by Traylor and Chaquico, which is full of lively images suitable to the case of a fellow who is hooked on a girl and "don't know how to stop."

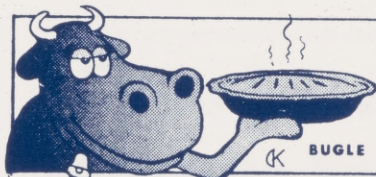
The group has a very good sound, whether designed for the nice, gentle "I've Got You," or the fast, urgent "Time to be Happy," driven like a storm before the wind of Chaquico's guitar. Not everything is sensational ("Smile" is a rather repetitious rock piece) but most of the songs are good ones, extremely well performed. In addition to those mentioned, Danny Viridir is on bass and vocals and Diana Harris does vocals and piano.



WOLFF



HURST



BUGLE AMERICAN AUG 8, 1973

Cowpie

by the
music staff

In the last column I wrote, the demand was made for a better class of garbage. For one who hasn't developed the clean negative edge of a good New York critic, panning groups is a cause for mild trauma. You begin to dream that garbage may sweep the land. (I remember when the Beatles first came out and began to steal the light from the almighty Dylan. Since then we've learned that there is room in heaven for two, but at the time it was not to be believed.)

On the other hand, though some groups take a bit of getting used to, and some are hard to mix with other sounds, it always comes to a matter of taste and choice; I'm glad to bring these to your attention.

Jack Traylor and Steel Wind, Child of Nature, Grunt Records, BF1-0194
Joe E. Covington, Fat Fandango, Grunt Records, BF1-0149
Mary McCreary, Butterflies in Heaven, MCA Records, MCA 347

Don't know whether to tell you to listen to the first cut on

the "B" side of Steelwind, or let you come to it naturally. The song is "Come On Children" and sets the perspective of our time. This isn't a Super Group—more early San Francisco—but their music is strong. It comes from a time when listening to music meant playing it yourself.

Jack has done some work for Jefferson Airplane and either he picked up on their style, or some of his rubbed off on them. Either way, a good combination.

This man is old enough to know the folly of competition. He just plays what he knows, and plays it well. Members of the group have known each other for quite a while, and speak well of each other. Diana Harris works excellently with the group blending her voice with Jack's. She joined just before Steelwind went in to record and has trouble with the subtle pacing of some songs, but that can be easily forgiven. No one is given credit for Flute. My guess is that it's Craig Chaquico, a young guitarist who played with Jack in the Airplane sessions. I'm personally a sucker for good flute and turned off by bad—more than any other instrument. Craig makes the sound float like the silent presence of a barn swallow.



SHEPHERD



MILLER

i poet sez:

as an antidote to harrisons asinine spirituality i have been playin a record that i feel is truly spiritual in the highest sense. firmly rooted in the belly of the earth mother, smooth and mellow as a (dare i say it) mountain stream, clear and fresh as a paleozoic sky. i refer to jack taylor and steelwind on grunt records (B FLI-0194) their first album, out a few months now, is called "child of nature". if i was gonna meditate id rather look at the naked child runnin down to the sea on the cover of this l.p., than a million bloody krishnas runnin off into battle (guess who has a pic of krishna inside his l.p.?)

the tracks have a soft country rock sound and are as refreshing as a deep breath of fresh air. if harrisons are a whiff of hindu d.m.t., tralorsongs are the windy dingers of the goddess playin with your hair, rite hear on earth. the title track is so beautiful both musically and lyrically that it almost makes me cry.

"a man never knows where he came from/he nevr asks where hes gointo/he is driven by an instinct, born a billion years ago/ what else can a child of nature do?"

aint that refreshing? thats what i call faith, wll anchored in the body and the rest is just as good, altho "child of nature" and "i ve got you" are my own personal favorites. the group plays toged-

BERKELEY BARB AUGUST 17-23, 1973 —

der, no super stars or ego trip-pin. the instruments wind, dance, weave patterns, and paint pictures on the inside of your eyelids. its really earth music, songs a happy stone sittin on a seashore mite sing, the rustling of bamboo reeds, the things a butterfly hears but never told anyone before, the daydreams that wander in and out of a drunken poets head whilst he (or she) watches the moon.

nothing earth shakin, just a nice clean record. folk music for freeks. now and again they wander a bit off th mark but all and all it's satisfying stuff. slip it under your raincoat the next time your in tower records. ya wont be sorry. (unless ya get busted on the way out that is)
